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Post-deluge, cage-fish farming comes alive again in Kerala

by SAJEEV KUMAR

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Last year's devastating floods have not dampened the hopes of cage-fish farmers in Kerala. The majority of such fish farming ventures, which were badly hit in the deluge, are back on track, thanks to efforts initiated by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) with the financial support of the National Fisheries Development Board.

Cage fish farming enterprises, which were taken up as they offer better livelihood options for coastal communities, suffered a loss of ₹2.16 crore, and saw the coastal pushed into distress.

However, the CMFRI project is playing a crucial role in reviving such projects and preventing a complete collapse.

Ever since the project was launched, several people have been approaching CMFRI expressing their willingness to be part of the project.



Locked in A total of 179 cage units have been launched and 163 farmers, mostly women, are now associated with cage-fish farming

programme, said Imelda Joseph, Head of the Mariculture division of the institute, which oversees the project.

The National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB)-funded project was timely to lend a helping hand to the coastal community, which lost everything in the deluge. CMFRI reached out to the community with awareness programmes and training to get them to start

cage fish farming. CMFRI is still looking for people interested in this specific occupation, she added.

The CMFRI project envisages setting up of 500 cage-fish farming units by providing technical and financial assistance to farmers struggling to earn a steady living.

A total of 179 cage units have been launched so far and around 163 farmers,

now associated with the project. Nearly 4.5 lakh fish seeds have been stocked in as many as 179 cages set up at Ernakulam, Alappuzha, Thrissur, Kollam and Kanur.

According to Joseph, farmers are now waiting for the first harvest of their fish after the floods during the third week of this month.

Profitable business

A net average profit of more than ₹3 crore is expected from these farms. Asian Seabass and Pearl Spot are the species that are stocked in the cages for farming. Another batch of 150 people will start cage-fish farming soon.

Besides technical support, CMFRI is providing 40 per cent of the total expense to launch the cage farming unit as a subsidy to the farmers. The rate of subsidy for women and those from the reserved category is 60 per